

Late Backup

Families and Children Task Force



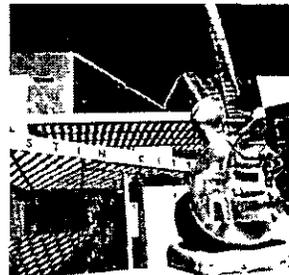
Austin City Council

October 16, 2008

Families and Children Task Force

History of Task Force

- City Council created on June 21, 2007.
- Purpose: To assess and make recommendations about how City could better serve families of all income levels.
- Studied best practices, conducted city-wide survey and focus groups, met with experts.
- Submitted report with recommendations in June 2008.



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Experts agree:

Families with children are critical to the growth, diversity, vibrancy, and economic vitality of a city.

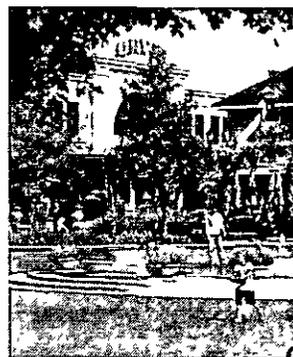
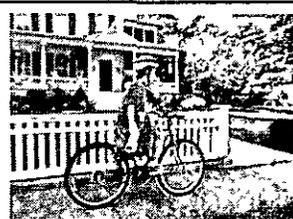


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What is a family-friendly city?

- Safe, affordable housing (designed for families)
- Affordable, quality child care
- Excellent public schools
- Parks and playspaces within walking distance (1/4 to 1/2 mile)
- Pedestrian and bicycle pathways
- Safe neighborhoods

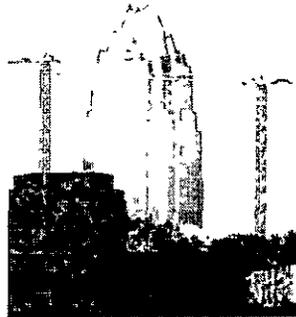
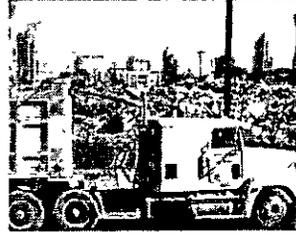


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The challenge for Austin

The number of families in the central core is declining. The City is losing important family amenities such as child care centers and affordable, family-sized housing.



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Public survey & focus groups: Austin is becoming less welcoming to families

- High housing costs in central core
- Quality of public schools
- Disparities in access to resources
- Need for safer biking/walking
- Need for more child-friendly open space
- Lack of affordable quality child care

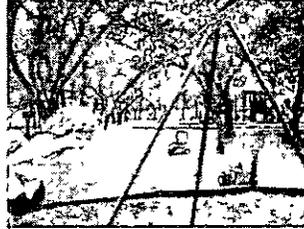
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Task Force Report

Areas of primary focus:

- Planning
- Housing
- Parks/cultural amenities
- Child care
- Schools
- Transportation



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Planning

Family-friendly cities create better built environments by keeping central the needs of families and by involving families in the decision-making processes.



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Planning Recommendations

Adopt new mission statement:

Austin is committed to being the most family-friendly city in the country and will ensure that its policies and decisions support and enhance the quality of life for Austin's families and children.

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Planning Recommendations

- Create Families with Children Commission
- Create Families with Children ombudsperson
- Adopt family-friendly design standards
- Address the needs and interests of families with children in the Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Plan, neighborhood plans, and all other plans.

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Housing

Housing is the key requirement for bringing new families into the city and retaining those who already are in Austin.

Greater access to affordable family-sized housing is needed throughout the city and particularly in the urban core.



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Housing Recommendations

- Fund a model family-friendly development that illustrates best practices and design standards in a TOD.
- Adopt a 20-year vision and plan for closing affordable housing gap in Austin. Set specific targets for families with children through five-year Consolidated Plans.
- Start rental assistance program to keep K-12 students in their neighborhood schools.

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Housing Recommendations

- Make city's existing affordable housing programs more accessible for families with children
 - Get more families with children into city-developed housing (5/20 family-sized homes developed by city were sold to families with children)
 - Create priorities for 2+ bedrooms
 - Require NHCD to collect data on family composition in city-administered housing programs
 - In existing and new density bonus programs, base affordable unit requirements on square footage rather than unit count

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Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Amenities

Parks and cultural amenities contribute to the family-oriented character of a community and have important economic, environmental, and social benefits.



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Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Amenities recommendations

• Implement goal of green space access within ¼ mile for urban areas and ½ mile in suburban areas.

- Experts show that people won't walk unless ½ mile or less
- Cities such as Minneapolis, Denver, Chicago, and Seattle are working toward goal of all residents within 1/8 to 1/2 mile of green space



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Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Amenities recommendations

• Ways to expand green space and play features in urban core

- Create smaller pocket parks and urban playspaces vs traditional 1 acre
- Partner with property owners, private sector, and schools
- Convert small undevelopable parcels into micro playspaces
- Create Public Improvement Districts to support improvements and operations
- Incorporate play features in public spaces Seaholm, Green, new downtown library, downtown squares



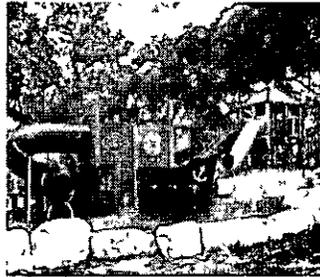
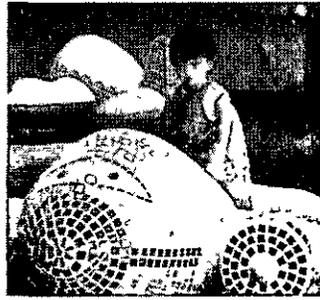
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Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Amenities recommendations

• *Include a broader range of family-friendly features in parks and programs.*

- Integrate diverse and innovative play elements and features.
- Expand services to children with intellectual and physical disabilities
- Expand offerings to toddlers and older children.



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Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Amenities recommendations

• *Expand cultural opportunities for families with children in Downtown and throughout the city.*

- Support Downtown Family Night
- Create pedestrian zones on weekends with family cultural activities
- Incorporate child-friendly features in existing public spaces, build creative urban spaces
- Recruit new family-friendly cultural institution downtown (e.g., science and technology museum)



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Child Care

Child care services are essential for not only families with children but the economy of our region. Difficulty in accessing child care close to work or home will be a significant deterrent to families who are considering locating or staying in Austin.



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Child Care Recommendations

- Endorse policy recognizing that child care is an economic development issue.
- Conduct needs assessment and develop strategic plan.
- Consider Child Care Council recommendations:
 - Encourage community benefit agreements that include child care in new development projects
 - Require impact reviews that analyze how new developments will affect existing child care services.
 - Incorporate child care in TODs.
 - Target portion of fee-in-lieu-of proceeds from Downtown development for child care
 - Provide land and building space for child care as part of city real estate transactions.

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Schools

The City of Austin should strengthen its collaborations with area districts.



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Schools Recommendations

Improve collaborative planning between the City of Austin and AISD

- Adopt policy for formal, coordinated planning
- Articulate clear areas of focus for the COA/AISD Joint Subcommittee
- Collaborate with AISD on 2009 plan to reverse declining enrollment in central city schools
- Take active role in discussions related to facility changes
- Coordinate on capital improvement projects
- Explore adopting impact fees to support school-related improvements

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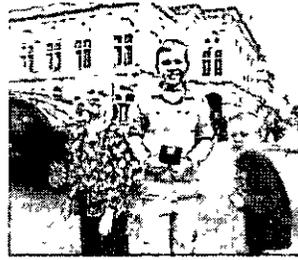
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Schools Recommendations

Sustain model of neighborhood schools
Require Educational Impact Assessment
for large developments

Increase joint facility use

- Develop new and existing schools as joint-use facilities
- Explore opportunities to share amenities such as parks, landscaping, and pools

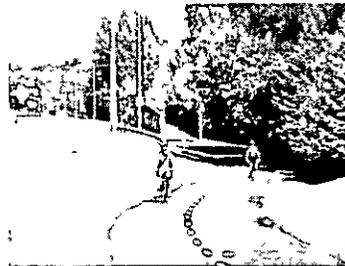


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Transportation

The City of Austin should increase the efficiency and safety of its transportation network.



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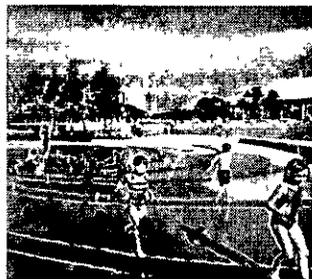
Transportation Recommendations

- Expand bicycle and pedestrian pathways, especially near schools, parks, and public transit
- Increase the safety of our streets, crossings, and bicycle/pedestrian pathways through signage, traffic calming, and increased enforcement



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